

**North Dakota School for the Deaf
Future Services Plan (FSP) Transition Team
Meeting #4**

Thursday, February 18, 2010

Meeting Summary

Meeting Goals

- To review and affirm the foundational structure and process for the NDSD Future Services Plan (FSP) Initiative;
- To review, discuss, revise and approve the draft Transition Team Meeting Summary from December 17, 2009;
- To review and discuss the results of the FSP Progressive Survey;
- To review and discuss public input and comments;
- To receive informational presentations regarding current components of the educational and service delivery systems for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in North Dakota;
- To begin identifying and outlining the components of North Dakota's Future Services Plan for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; and
- To identify the "next steps" in the process including any additional data, materials, information and presentations.

Transition Team Participants: Diane Rice, Michelle Rolewitz, Terry Solheim, Nancy McKenzie, Cindy Wetzel, Fred Bott, Connie Hovendick, Larry Robinson, and Carol Lybeck.

Staff:

Gary Gronberg, Carmen Grove Suminski and Nancy Skorheim.

Interpreters:

Cathy Obregon and Renae Bitner.

Guests:

Tammy Iszler

Facilitated by:

The Consensus Council, Inc.

Welcome and Introductions:

Transition Team members were welcomed to the meeting and provided self-introductions, including brief stories and updates from over the holidays.

Foundational Structure and Process Review:

Transition Team participants reviewed the meeting materials provided including:

- Meeting #4 Agenda
- Meeting #3 (12/17/10) Draft Summary
- Summary of Public Comments received via NDSD website
- Updated Progressive Survey
- Transition Team Contact List
- Section 19 of HB 1013

Participants reviewed the consensus-based decision-making process and the previously affirmed ground rules including:

- It's your show/opportunity.
- Everyone is equal.
- No relevant topic is excluded.
- No discussion is ended.
- Respect opinions.
- Respect the time.
- Silence is agreement.
- Keep the facilitator accurate.
- Non-attribution.
- Open meeting.
- No substitutes or proxies.
- Have fun!

Participants also reviewed the previously established Transition Team Values including:

- The focus will be on the people who need/receive/use the services.
- Services will be of the highest quality – the “best.”
- The plan/services will be need-driven, responsive and flexible.
- All activities and recommendations will reflect a leadership role that is current, and creative.
- Related laws and regulations will be identified and respected.
- Fiscal responsibility and good stewardship will be stressed.
- Efforts will reflect a broad focus and the inclusion of all deaf/HH programs in the state.
- Services should be available and accessible to all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The process will reflect a comprehensive approach to the needs of adults who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Recommendations will be based on a continuum of services for all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing from infancy to old age.

Participants reviewed the agenda and agreed to proceed as planned.

The meeting summary from meeting #3 was also reviewed including a discussion of the public input provided during that meeting and there were

no recommended changes, however, concerns were noted relative to the public comment made by a parent of a child with deafness that experienced difficulty in accessing services through the public school. During the discussion questions and uncertainty was noted regarding the school district's efforts and responsibilities regarding the provision of services, the content of the IEP, the composition of the IEP team, the school staff's knowledge of American Sign Language and the communication needs of the student, and the role of the Special Education District. It was pointed out that situations occur where parents and professionals do not agree on the specifics of an education plan for a student and needed services are not available in all communities across the state.

This prompted discussion regarding the differences in services from region to region and from Special Education District to Special Education District; there is a lack of consistency and uniformity regarding philosophy and priorities on a statewide basis. The Guidelines for Special Education professionals require the identification of the most appropriate service rather than what may meet the minimum standards. Additionally, professionals who work with students with disabilities must be properly trained and credentialed (this is also true of advocates).

The state-funded nature of NDSD may be attractive to some local school districts as an "economical" solution to the difficulties they face in providing an array of appropriate services to the deaf and hard of hearing students for whom they are responsible.

The participants agreed that services should be equally available and accessible to all students and that fiscal and philosophical priorities (sports activities) do not always seem to reflect this approach. Additionally, the lack of and need for advocacy training and assistance to students and parents was pointed out again. Consistent with the Transition Team's values, decisions regarding student services should be based on what is needed and most appropriate for each student and not on what the budget will allow. Although the TT recognized its commitment to good stewardship, the ARC lawsuit (Judge Van Sickle) was used as an example of "taking money off the table" and focusing on the client in determining services.

Philosophical differences continue to complicate the educational structure and system regarding services for North Dakota's deaf and hard of hearing students. Another factor affecting the discussion is the lack of public Pre-K in the state.

The Transition Team agreed that it has a valuable role in helping to identify gaps in services with the realization that it will not be possible to provide all services in every neighborhood school. And it was noted that these same issues are faced in the delivery/provision of other state services (human

services). Meeting the balance of local and regional services continues to be a challenge for rural states like North Dakota.

Progressive Survey Review and Discussion

The Progressive Survey results from Meeting #3 were inadvertently misplaced; requested responses, after the fact, were compiled, but were not sufficient to provide statistically significant data. The Progressive Survey will be re-administered during the meeting today.

Review and Discussion of Public Input and Comments

The public input process was reviewed (constituency representation, website posting and access, confidential one-way email option, one-way public input time at every meeting, and a standard agenda opportunity for public input discussion) and the participants agreed to continue the process in its present status. No additional observations or discussions were made at this time.

Informational Presentations

Nancy Skorheim reviewed the current (updated) version of the DPI IDEA Information Paper in Education relative to deaf and hard of hearing students in North Dakota (provided as a handout). And Nancy noted that a similar revision to the Vision Services paper has also been completed.

Nancy reviewed the Child Count numbers for ND (from 2001 – 2009) as well as the number of students with a primary or secondary disability of hearing impairment by region (provided as handouts). The Child Count report is an annual, federally mandated point-in-time report that occurs on December 1. The regional numbers represent the results of a survey conducted for the purposes and needs of the TT. The significantly larger number of students identified in the Bismarck region than in either Fargo or Grand Forks was observed, and although there is no clear reason for the disparity it may be related to the active hearing screening process used in Bismarck and/or general accuracy of reporting data. Bismarck has also been noted to have a specific, full time coordinator for these services unlike other areas of the state. There may also be some disparity in the “identification” process of hearing loss/deafness with some students possibly being identified in the speech and language disabilities categories.

Participants were directed to previous reports provided at Meeting #1 relative to budget/financial comparisons of cost of education at the NDSD vs. public school education. It was agreed that, as a point of reference, ND tends to have higher costs per capita than other states in the country due to lack of critical mass in our population distribution. \$80,300, the amount identified as the annual per student cost at NDSD (2007 – 2009) includes both residential services and indirect services and appears about average when compared to other similar state facilities in the Midwest. The \$15,992 (2001) national average of the cost of community-based public education

seems to support the current anecdotal range of \$10,000 - \$20,000 for a ND student.

Many questions arose regarding the cost data including:

- Are they comparable totals?
- Are the numbers/studies outdated?
- How much classroom instruction and/or other services (psychology, physical therapy, audiology, etc.) does each include?
- Is the quality comparable? How can equity be factored in?
- Should costs be evaluated based on “highest” need students in the community rather than the average student?
- How can student success/outcomes be measured and/or compared? How can outcomes that don’t happen be considered?
- How can “least restrictive environment” be assessed in relation to social, after-school activities (for community-based students, these costs and responsibilities are borne by the parents and not factored into school district costs)?
- Because a high percentage of all overall costs, in general, are related to personnel (salaries and benefits) and these costs are not consistent across school districts, how can these be properly factored into the discussion?

The participants agreed that factors other than cost (including parent/student choice and available community services) are critical to this discussion, and there may be instances where community-based services can actually be more costly than traditional residential services, based on the degree of the individual students need. Evaluating cost factors, at the community level, might be easier/better after specific services and their related costs are identified.

Little information seems to be available concerning successful community-based student outcomes, but James Johnson has recently completed a study of NDSD alumni that he will be asked to report on at the next meeting.

The participants agreed that consistent with the TT’s established values, both costs and the educational/service needs of the student/individual must be addressed, however, the TT members clearly indicated that the issue of cost comparisons, beyond establishing some general parameters, is neither possible/reliable because of the significant variance in factors, nor should it be a major function of the TT’s or a focus of the plan.

The TT asked that the basic information be reviewed and updated in order to inform the process and affirm the credibility of the Transition Team. The following members agreed to compile this data and have it ready for distribution to the full TT membership by March 18, 2010:

- National data: Nancy Skorheim
- NDSD Outreach Services data: Carol Lybeck

- Devils Lake, Fargo and representative rural Public School data: Connie Hovendick
- Bismarck Public School data: Cindy Wetzel

It was agreed that:

- The information from the respective sources should include an inventory of specific services and their related costs.
- The data gathered is intended to provide the TT with “ballpark” figures on which to base future discussions and decisions.
- The information will be ready for review prior to the March meeting of the Transition Team.

The participants made the following observations regarding service gaps and needs and their need/desire for additional information:

- The composition of the TT provides offers an appropriate, alternative source of reliable, respected information regarding the various constituencies and services gaps.
- There seems to be adequate information about services for several groups/populations, but a more specific, comprehensive outline of services and locations based on populations (profiles) would be helpful in plan development and support as the plan is “rolled out.”
- There is not a clear delineation/listing of what services are available for North Dakotans of all ages (profiles) by region.
- There are instances where individuals or families have needs but don’t know where to go or who to call for assistance. An example was given of a person with hearing loss in an assisted living facility that is becoming increasingly isolated because of the hearing loss.

The North Dakota Association for the Deaf (NDAD) Board of Directors met recently and provided the following input for the Transition Team in terms of what they believe are important issues, missing services:

- Mental health services (without use of an interpreter).
- Basic and expanded knowledge (professionals and the public) about deafness.
- Improved interpreter services/access; interpreters must be certified by state law (NDCC 43-52 – attached). Note: The law lacks any provision for monitoring and enforcement.
- Employment assistance and advocacy
- The potential of a Center of Excellence status for NDSD and the use of “exemplary” districts were discussed.

There was discussion about using the NDSD as a resource center for the provision of statewide D/HH outreach services and support for people of all ages. This may be similar to the incremental process that was used by the ND School for the Blind as they transitioned from residential to outreach services. Currently, Vision Services in Grand Forks has two (2) full time employees just for outreach provision. The significant differences in the

educational needs and approaches between D/HH students and VI students were noted, and in order for this transition to occur, more funding and personnel will be needed.

As ND “grays” it will be important to partner with organizations that could assist with getting out the message and affirming the availability of outreach services (AARP, Aging Services, ND Long Term Care Association). It was noted that, in relation to assistance for older folks that have hearing loss, hearing aids are often needed without any resources to pay for these very costly items.

Diane Rice, Educational Coordinator, ND School for the Deaf, provided an overview of the NDSD services:

- There is a total of 22 students enrolled at NDSD;
- 4 of these students are in high school;
- NDSD has 9 full time, bachelors level teachers (2 are working on their masters degrees and all teachers are certified as “Highly Qualified” under the NCLB standards;
- All students have an IEP,
- All students receive total communication and deaf education;
- Some students take classes in public school - 3 elementary at Devils Lake public schools, 2 in Devils Lake middle school, 4 students attend Devils Lake High School and Career and Technology Education – all are supported by a sign language interpreter;
- Students participate in many Devils Lake community activities, also accompanied by sign language interpreters;
- Some students use captioned films, otherwise all other usual “school” technology is available at NDSD;
- Dorm staff include 4 full time employees and 2 overnight staff;
- 2 full time nurses are employed by NDSD and provide direct service and serve as a resource to local clinics and medical personnel in local school districts;
- Students are provided with 3 meals/day plus snacks;
- Students have direct communication with instructors, have exposure to deaf role models at various levels, and are able to socialize with both hearing/deaf staff and peers;
- Transportation provided (including roundtrip weekend transportation to their homes);
- NDSD prepares a regular school calendar; and
- 20 of the 22 students utilize the alternate state assessment.

Carol Lybeck, Outreach Coordinator, ND School for the Deaf, provided an overview of outreach services including:

- Outreach services have increased over time, however, more expansion is needed to adequately serve individuals ages zero to death;
- Parent infant program (home-based ages 0-3) outreach is the biggest program with 32 families enrolled and most are seen weekly;

- After child is 18 months old, some center-based services are offered;
- School age children are seen as needed (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly) and assessment, consultation, in-service and/or direct services are available;
- Data over time shows an overall increase in outreach although individual categories show gains/losses reflecting changing needs and the flexibility of the services;
- The National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities report (August 18, 2008) identifies a list of recommended outreach services and NDSD provides all of them at varying levels with the exception of mental health services;
- Strategic planning has been done and the plan (see handout) has been shared with legislators, Higher Education and with NDSD staff – the elements of the plan were reviewed with the participants;
- When fully staffed, the core outreach team includes 5 full time professionals located in Devils Lake, Bismarck, Fargo, Minot, Grand Forks (this position is currently unfilled) and they are supplemented by many other community-based professionals;
- Outreach staff are often asked to attend IEP meetings, but they are unable to meet all of the demands because of their limited staff and resources;
- Travel takes up a large amount of staff time, particularly for the infant parent services, which are modeled on a nationally accepted, best practices program;
- There is a great need for additional staff and resources in all areas, but particularly in the adult age group;
- A mobile services/technology van is in development with an expected deployment date of mid-March – this unit will allow outreach staff to make visits to long term care facilities where residents can try out technologies that can improve their quality of life;
- NDSD outreach programs are strictly prohibited from competing with the private sector (e.g. selling hearing aides, or other devices or promoting one device over another); and
- The majority of requests in the adult population group are from nursing homes and families/friends of individuals who require some assistance.

The Outreach Services Department began in 1988 and has grown by small, incremental increases over the years. Although the program is relatively small, the overall return on the investment is significant. Outreach staff work collaboratively with many professionals and groups across the state including AARP ND and the ND Long Term Care Association. It was noted that the Department of Human Services (DHS) has received federal funding for a pilot project in Burleigh County for an Aging and Disability and Resource Center (ADRC - a single point of entry pilot) and this may be a potentially good future partner/resource.

The members of the TT agreed to prepare a list of gaps in services (by age group and area) from their perspective. These lists (and the list previously presented on behalf of NDAD) will be reviewed, and discussed by the TT at their March meeting, and will be used to develop a specific inventory of the gaps as they exist throughout the state (Nancy McKenzie will contact Vocational rehabilitation staff statewide for their input). It was agreed that the resulting list may not carry the endorsement of a systematic survey or study, but it will represent the significant knowledge and collective experience of the TT members and their constituencies. Each TT member is asked to provide their list of gaps to the Consensus Council no later than Thursday, March 18, 2010, so that they may be distributed to all of the members of the TT for their review prior to the March 25, 2010, meeting.

Midwest Conference Report

Carmen Suminski, Superintendent, ND School for the Deaf, North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind provided an overview of the Midwest Superintendents and Outreach Conference of The Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs (CEASD) (in handout) including:

- Names/contact information of presenters and participants; and
- The meeting agenda, supplemented/annotated with notes from Carmen based on her observations and group reports, discussions.

TT members were encouraged to review the materials (including brief reports from Midwest states regarding the status of their schools) and contact Carmen with any questions.

Transition Planning – Visioning and Brainstorming

It should be noted that the participants expressed concerns over the pace and progress of the Transition Team's process. They indicated that there is a significant amount of work left to do and that the time is limited. They asked that informational presentations be considered carefully and be limited in their scope and allotted time, and that the focus of the process be moving forward with the plan.

Consistent with the TT members concerns and requests, the participants were encouraged to engage in "blue-sky" thinking and talking about their vision of what the service world for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing would/could/should look like.

The facilitator began with a "parking lot" list of ideas previously discussed and reported on including:

- Enhanced NDSD outreach services;
- A center or centers of excellence as a resource and support environment;
- The specific needs of an aging population and the opportunities that these changes offer;
- The interest/willingness of Vocational Rehabilitation to participate in the identification of potential options and services;

- Comparability to transitions made at the ND School for the Blind (proceeding with caution and the acknowledgement of the significant differences in need and approach).

Potential solutions identified include:

- A minimum of one outreach staff person in each of the 8 regions of the state (these could be the potential “hubs” for local service “spokes”).
- Consistent service options across the state for children ages 3 – 21 in public schools.
- Available local or center-based, intensive preschool services for all children with hearing impairments with special emphasis on improving and expanding knowledge and service to children with cochlear implants
 - Emphasis on the provision and availability of preschool services to all hearing impaired children because of the documented success for children at school entry.
 - Coordination of preschool services by one entity, with flexibility for local uniqueness and flexibility for movement from location to location.
- Outreach services need to be inclusive of all ages and all types of hearing loss.
- Center/central location (NDSD) to provide specialized residential services “if the needs of the individual exceed the capacity of the community to meet them.”
- A continued residential campus for those with multiple medical challenges? The campus would be a resource base (Center of Excellence) with community-based “resources” coming to the campus for additional training, in service, teaching assignments, and going from the campus as well to provide training and in service at off campus locations? To some extent, a lab school.
- A change in how we think about the usual/traditional constructs including timeframes, e.g. the school year is not necessarily just nine months for all, will not be available only September through May (inherent to this is the dilemma of the typical rule that school is generally not in session in the summer).
- The need for summer “camp-type” experiences, which would be more than just recreational in nature.
- The operation/promotion of a revolving/open door type of service (wrap around service-like), to help people who need a combination of community-based and other services.
- Assuring the high qualifications and preparation of professionals who are working both the spoke and hub.
- A changing mission for NDSD like that of the ND State Hospital (NDSH). Unlike wide-open admission policies of the past, the NDSH now serves only those whose needs exceed the services available in the local community. Evaluation must be done locally to determine the service level before a referral can be made to NDSH.

- Screenings can be done at the local level to identify needs (this is already done as part of the determination of need for an IEP).
- All screening teams should include qualified personnel including a teacher of the deaf. A person who is deaf could provide role modeling and advocacy AND/OR mentor the parents to form a relationship (prior to an IEP) and then be invited to participate in the IEP process. Parents may not be well acquainted with their children's rights as deaf individuals, and this could be addressed through advocacy.
- An educational campaign/training and awareness program to reach business people, consumers and the general public about hearing impairments and the available services.
- Acceptance of the divergent thinking about the merits of immersing deaf children in the deaf culture; some parents prefer not to do so; others believe this view is short-sighted and comes from a lack of exposure and knowledge to deaf culture.
- The increase in cochlear implants being done may relate to the parents desire for the highest level of inclusion for their child.
- A shared respect (among Transition Team members and the public) for individual choice although not necessarily complete agreement on medical interventions or treatment modalities.
- An agreement that the role/look of the NDSD may change/shift over time.

Identification of Next Steps

Participants were reminded of their assignments for completion prior to the next meeting.

Summary Comments

Participants were asked to provide summary comments and they are as follows:

- I enjoyed the meeting but missed those who were absent. We look forward to their reaction to today's valuable discussion. Good dialogue that helps us progress and will force some reaction.
- The last couple of hours have been the most beneficial.
- I was frustrated that we weren't getting anywhere. However, the presentations were very helpful and I think it ended up fine.
- Appreciate learning from the experts but am concerned that we are running short of time.
- I'm glad we are going to identify the gaps; to this list we can add more dreams. I try to think about the dreams without thinking about the obstacles.
- As my first meeting, I most liked getting into the meat of the issue and coming up with possible solutions; I look forward to talking to my colleagues about that in the future.
- I like the brainstorming about our goals and how we work toward them.

- Once we hear this drum start beating, we need to roll with it. Starting right now.
- I've heard a lot about meeting the needs of all ages and I like that. I think that teachers of the deaf are/can be coaches in their teaching approaches.

Nancy McKenzie agreed to arrange for assistance from Aging Services Division of DHS in reporting to the Transition Team regarding services to senior citizens.

Progressive Survey: Participants completed the Progressive Survey for collection and compilation by the facilitator.

Public Input: Laura from Lake Region State College (LRSC); LRSC has a collaborative relationship with NDSD to train interpreters for the deaf due to overall shortages. The program is a two-year degree (?), and once completed, most graduates can pass the written portion of the registry test. However, they are not usually prepared to pass the practical portion of the test. Lake Region State College is looking at changing its degree program to better prepare interpreters as well as a training program for real-time captioning workers. LRSC must assure there is employment opportunity for those that LRSC graduates and hopes to continue learning from the Transition Team. Very helpful information gleaned today.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned by consensus of the group with best wishes for safe travels to home destinations.

Next Meetings

Planning Team Meeting

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

10:00 a.m. to Noon

Bismarck, ND - face-to-face and conference call.

Transition Team Meeting

Thursday, March 25, 2010

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Job Service North Dakota

Bismarck, ND